



FOES OF THE FIFTH!



A NARROW ESCAPE ON THE ROAD!

(A Thrilling Incident in the Splendid Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)

8-9-19

FOLKS OF THE FIFTH



B7

**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale dealing with the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. on a Caravan Tour.

CHAPTER I.

An Old Acquaintance!

ZIP, zip, zip!
"Keep to the left!" sang out Tom Merry.

Zip, zip!
The St. Jim's caravan was rolling along a chalky road in Bucks.

Study No. 6 were sitting on the caravan. The Terrible Three were walking with the horse. They were taking it easy, proceeding at a very leisurely pace while looking out for a suitable camp. The beautiful county of Buckingham was looking its best in the glorious summer weather, and the seven caravanners of St. Jim's were enjoying themselves.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a map spread out on his knee, studying the roads. He studied the map with the aid of his celebrated eyeglass and a thoughtful frown. Nearly every turning that the caravan passed Arthur Augustus announced was "wight for Aylesbury"; but Tom Merry kept on with the horse. He did not trust to Gussy's judgment in the matter of maps.

The caravan was approaching a sharp turning when the buzz of a motor-cycle was heard approaching round the corner.

Jack Blake gave a jerk on the rein, and Circumstances, the horse, swerved in to the left, to give the motor-cyclist plenty of room to come round the corner. A thick bunch of oaks at the corner hid the approaching cyclist from view, and the St. Jim's juniors could only hear his engine.

"Bai Jove! I think that turnin' is wight for Aylesbury, aftah all!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked. "This map is wathah confusin', especially as it keeps

jerkin' about on a fellow's knee. We turn to the left heah, Tom Meewy."

"Bow-wow!" answered Tom.

"Weally, Tom Meewy—"

"That's about the fifth turning you've told us to take for Aylesbury," remarked Monty Lowther. "The signposts don't agree with you, Gussy."

"I do not wholly rely on signposts, Lowthah, Bai Jove! That uttah as is on the w'ing side!"

Arthur Augustus uttered that startled exclamation as the motor-cyclist came in sight, whirling round the corner on the wrong side of the road.

Blake dragged at the reins.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther all caught the horse's head at the same time.

The caravan halted.

Round the corner came the motor-bike at a great speed, with a rather handsome, reckless-looking youth mounted upon it.

It looked for a moment as if a collision was inevitable.

It was impossible for the big, heavy caravan to clear out of the way, and the rider did not even see it till he was round the corner.

Tom Merry caught his breath, in expectation of seeing the reckless rider crash headlong into either the horse or the van.

"Oh!"

"Look out!"

"Bai Jove!"

The motor-cyclist saw his danger, however, and swerved just in time, so closely that he nearly grazed the van.

The motor-bike wobbled and tottered, and the next instant crashed into a hedge.

"Great Scott!"

"That's done it!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove! What a feashfully naw-wow shave for the van, deah boys! I weally shoudn't wondah if that chap is hurt."

"The careless ass!" growled Herries. "The bike will want some repairs," remarked Digby. "That merry merchant will want a lift home."

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther left the horse, and ran towards the hapless rider.

The motor-bike was gasping in the hedge; but the rider had been tossed off into the grass beside the road, and was sprawling there.

The accident was due to his own recklessness; but the Terrible Three were quite ready to render first aid to a cyclist in distress.

The wrecked cyclist sat up as the chums of St. Jim's reached him. He blinked at them dazedly.

Then there was an exclamation from all three Shell fellows at once.

"Cutts!"

It was Gerald Cutts, of the Fifth Form at St. Jim's—quite an old acquaintance of the juniors, though not a friendly one.

"Not hurt, Cutts!" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh!" gasped Cutts.

"Let's give you a hand up, anyhow," said Manners.

"Hang you!"

"Eh?"

Cutts of the Fifth staggered to his feet. He did not seem to be hurt, beyond a shaking, but he was certainly very angry.

"Confound you and your fool van!" he gasped. "What the thump did you get that contraption in the way for!"

"Your own fault," answered Tom Merry quietly. "You should look where you're going."

"Have you bought up all the roads in Buckinghamshire, by any chance, really?" inquired Monty Lowther sadly.

"Cannons gave a snort of contempt. "Hang your cheek!" gasped Cutts. "You might have broken my neck!"

"You might have broken it yourself, certainly," agreed Tom Merry. "If it's of any value, I shouldn't risk it like that."

"Probably it isn't!" observed Lowther. Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, jumped down from the van and came up to the spot. The angry Fifth-Former looked as if trouble was coming; and Study No. 6 were ready to give him all the trouble he wanted.

"I must remark that you are wathah an unreasonable ass, Cutts!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "You might have injured our horse by wunnin' into it. I consider that the affair has turned out awfully lucky. Only you and your bike have been injured."

"You young idiot!"

"Weally, Cutts—"

"Hadn't you better look after your bike?" suggested Blake, as Gerald Cutts clenched his fists. "It seems to have trouble in the Central Powers."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutts glared at the juniors, and looked for a moment or two inclined to rush upon them. But probably it occurred to him that for one to rush upon seven was rather too large an order. He muttered something under his breath, which it was just as well the juniors did not hear, and turned to his unfortunate motor-bike and dragged it from the hedge.

"Can we help you?" inquired Tom Merry politely.

Grunt from Cutts.

"Yaas, wathah! I certainly regard you as a wackless ass, Cutts! But we should be quite willin' to wendah help."

"Oh, shut up!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Cutts—"

"Hold your tongue!"

Arthur Augustus's eye glinted behind his eyeglass. He pushed back his cuffs, and Jack Blake grabbed his arm.

"Well, what's the game?" Blake demanded.

"I am goin' to give Cutts a foshful thrashin', Blake!"

"Bow-wow! Come on!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"This way to the van, as Cutts doesn't want our help," said Tom Merry.

"We've got to find a camp before dark."

"Weally, Tom Mewey—"

"Yank him along by the ears," said Manners.

"I wufess to be yanked along by the yahs, Mannahs. I regard the suggestion as uttably wicidulous. However, if you fellows are in a hurwy, I will not waste time thrashin' Cutts."

It did not seem to occur to Gussy that he might have found considerable difficulty in thrashing the big Fifth-Former of St. Jim's. However, he gave up his warlike intentions, and walked back to the van with his comrades.

Circumstances was cropping the rich grass by the roadside, and seemed loth to give up that agreeable occupation; but Tom Merry persuaded him—with a firm hand—to turn into the road again.

"We'll get on the van now," remarked Tom. "You fags can walk a bit."

"Whom are you calling fags?" inquired Jack Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I regard that expedition as extremely degawotawy, Tom Mewey—"

"My mistake!" said Tom. "I mean

you estimable young gentlemen of the Fourth Form!"

"That is bettah, deah boy! Pway do not forget your mannahs while you are out cawavannin'."

"Oh, lets get ahead!" said Herries. "I'm hungry!"

The Terrible Three climbed on the van, and Blake & Co. walked with Circumstances—heading that somewhat determined animal off the grass every time he started for it. There was no reason why Circumstances shouldn't wait for his supper till the caravanners had theirs; but he did not seem to see it.

The van was swinging on cheerily in the sunset once more, when there was a sound of running feet behind, and a voice shouted:

"Hold on! Stop!"

Cutts of the Fifth came up breathlessly.

CHAPTER 2.

Cutts Asks for It!

TOM MERRY pulled in the horse. "Well, what's wanted, Cutts?" he asked.

Gerald Cutts breathed hard. He was still looking angry, but at the same time forcing himself to be civil.

"Which way are you kids going?" he asked.

"We're going to camp a bit nearer Aylesbury," answered Tom Merry.

"You're not keeping on to the Chilterns?"

"To-morrow," answered Tom, "we intend to go on through Wendover."

"Anything else?" asked the captain of the Shell politely. He did not quite see what Cutts was driving at.

George Herries gave an expressive grunt. He was hungry, and the halt did not please him. There was a good deal to do before supper, even after a camp had been found.

"Well, my bike's knocked out," said Cutts. "I can't ride it again."

"Borry?"

"Yaas, wathah! I ammah you of my sympathy, Cutts, though it was weally your own fault, you know."

Cutts sniffed. Arthur Augustus's sympathy did not seem of much use to him. "I want a lift," he said.

"Oh! said Tom. "A lift for you—that's easy enough, but I don't know about sticking the motor-bike on the caravan."

"Couldn't be done," said Herries.

"It would be vevy libble to scawth the paint, I think. The push-bike we have hangin' on is wathah a wowwy sometimes, Cutts."

"I can't leave a motor-bike by the roadside!" growled the dandy of the St. Jim's Fifth.

"I suppose not," Tom Merry hesitated, and looked at his chums inquiringly.

Cutts' request was rather a large order; but Tom was good-natured, and some of the less desirous of obliging because he did not like Gerald Cutts personally.

"What do you fellows say?"

"Rot!" was Herries' opinion.

"Well, the chap's stranded," said Manners. "It's his own fault; but he's stranded. After all, he's a St. Jim's chap!"

"I suppose we could manage it," said Tom slowly. "It won't be much of a lift, though, Cutts; we're not going all the way to Aylesbury."

"I don't want to go to Aylesbury."

"That's all right, then."

"I'm bound for a house on the Chilterns—past Wendover," explained Cutts. "I want a lift in that direction."

The juniors stared at Cutts.

"We're not going Wendover way to-day," said Tom.

"Well I want you to."

"Eht!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm bound for St. Leger's place, near Wendover," granted Cutts. "It's past Wendover—right on the Chiltern Hills. You may have heard of it—St. Leger Lodge."

"Never heard of it," said Tom Merry. "I fancy you'll have to use Shanks' pony, Cutts. We're not going that way."

"It's only about a mile past Wendover."

"And Wendover's five miles farther than we intend to go to-day," said Tom. "We've done a good distance already, Cutts, and we're looking for a camp. I doubt if our horse could do it—if we wanted to."

"And we don't want to!" exclaimed Blake warmly. "Blessed if I ever heard of such a nervé!"

"Cheek! said Digby.

Tom Merry was keeping patient; but the other fellows were showing very visible signs of impatience.

Cutts' request was really too cool. He was no joke to give a lift to a damaged motor-bike and its owner—a fellow with whom they were on bad terms at school. But to go six miles out of their way, at the end of a day's tramp, was a little too much. How Cutts could have the nerve to ask such a thing was a mystery.

"Look here, St. Leger's expecting me to dinner," said Cutts, surlily. "You know St. Leger of the Fifth—he's got a little party there on his own while his pater's away. I'm not goin' to miss it. I should have been nearly there by now, if you hadn't come along with your dashed van."

"If you hadn't run into the hedge, like a clumsy owl, you mean!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Really, Cutts, you know—"

interrupted Tom Merry, not quite knowing what to say.

"Will you do it?"

"Can't be done!"

"Look here, I'll pay you for your trouble," said Cutts roughly. "I'll stand you a quid. Now, get the bike on!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry's eyes glinted.

"That's enough, Cutts!" he said. "Gee-up, old boss!" The latter remark was addressed to Circumstances.

The caravan moved.

"You refuse my offer!" snapped Cutts. "Oh, don't be a fool! Do you think we want your money!" snapped Blake. "I'll make it a couple of quids, you greedy young rascals!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. He was at the end of his patience.

"Yaas, wathah! Dry up, you stiah wethah!"

Cutts stared after the caravanners as they moved on. He strode after them and rejoined the party.

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

he recommenced.

"No good talking—go and eat cokes!" answered Tom.

"Run away and play, old top!" said Digby.

"I've got to get to St. Leger Lodge—"

"Walk!" suggested Herries. "You can push your bike along, you know. Or take it under your arm."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A sudden back-hander from Cutts caught George Herries on the ear, and the Fourth-Former staggered across the road.

"That's for your cheek!" growled Cutts. "Now—"

Herries staggered blindly for a moment, and then he whirled round on Cutts. His eyes blazed as he snared at

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Go Fifth Formers, Blake and Dighty and B'Arcy-rashed with him.

"Stand back!" roared Cutts. "I—Take that! Oh—"

A fierce drive from Cutts sent Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was nearest, spinning. "The next moment Gerald Cutts himself was spinning, with three pairs of hands on him. He went down into the dusty road with a crash.

Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly.

"Collish him, dear boys!" he gasped.

"Oh excellent! Wag him!"

Blake & Co. were ragging Cutts fast enough without waiting for Gussy's orders. The Fifth-Former, his evil temper marshalled to his aid, the juniors were too much for him. The Terrible Three tumbled down from the van to land a hand. Six sturdy juniors had their grasp on Cutts, and he was rolled in the dust till he looked nearly all dust from head to foot.

Wild howls and ejaculations came from the Fifth-Former as he rolled. But the juniors had no mercy on him. Boxing Fourth Form cuts was quite unpardonable. Herries had both hands fastened in Cutts's collar, and he was rubbing the Fifth-Former's nose vigorously in the chalky dust of the road.

A motor-car halted by, the occupants staring blankly at the strange scene as they passed. The juniors did not heed. Gerald Cutts had asked for a lesson, and they meant to give him one.

And Cutts of the Fifth had it—Gussy was no doubt about that. He was heavily lashed, gasped and smothered with chalky dust, when the juniors finally rolled him into the ditch by the roadside.

There was not much water in the ditch, but there were plenty of nettles. Cutts roared and raved as he sprawled in them.

"There! I think that will do!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yass, watah!"

"No harm't had enough!" howled Herries.

"My dear chap—"

"He wants some more, I tell you!"

Cutts essayed to crawl out of the ditch, and Herries rushed on him and buried him back. The Fifth-Former sprawled in the nettles again, yelling Tom Merry & Co. chuckling.

Herries dragged him away.

"Enough's a good as a feast, old chap," chuckled Blake.

"Look at my ear!" roared Herries.

"It's a thing of beauty!" remarked Monty Lowther. "A beautiful crimson, old scout; it beats the merry sunset!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme errat him—"

"I weally think he has had enough, Henvie, to judge by his remarks. Let us wotter!"

The caravanners dragged Herries away, and Cutts was left to sort himself out of the bed of nettles at his leisure. The caravan rolled on along the road, Herries rubbing his ear and still snoring. Farther along the white road the caravanners looked back, in time to see Gerald Cutts crawl out of the ditch and shake a furious fist after them.

"Cutts looks watah watty," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I watah think he will be late for dinner with St. Leger of the Fifth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's a turnle" to the left, dear boy," added Arthur Augustus, and he blinked at his map. "That's wight for Aylesbury!"

"Right-ho! Keep straight on!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Monty, I remarked that this turnle' was wight for Aylesbury."

"That's why we're going to keep straight on," answered Tom Merry affably.

And the caravanners chuckled, and kept straight on. And Arthur Augustus remarked emphatically:

"Watah!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Mystery of Aylesbury!

"THIS looks all right for a camp!"

"Yes, rather! Halt!"

Circumstances willingly came to a halt on the green stretch of grass beside the road. He began clipping the grass at once, without waiting to be taken out of harness. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spread out his map on the horse's neck and blinked at it carefully. He announced that the caravanners were about a mile from Aylesbury, and that what looked like a big whale's back on the horizon was the Chiltern Hills.

"I will run into Aylesbury on the bike and do some shoppin'," he said. "You fellows on camp while I'm gone. Mind the horse doesn't watah!"

"Hate!"

"And mind you get fresh watah—"

"How woa!"

"Weally, dear boys—"

"Give your chin a rest, old chap."

"Watah!"

It was a little weakness of Gussy's to suppose that it was very doubtful whether things would go right in his absence. The bike was taken down, and Gussy looked to the tyre. Herries gave a grunt.

"Not much good Gussy going shoppin'," he said. "You know how he manages it."

"Weally, Henvie—"

"Oh, let him go," said Blake. "He won't be in the way while we're camping if he buzzes off to Aylesbury. I'll get along to the farm yonder and see if there's any milk to be had, and cheese."

"You've got the list of things, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry, rather anxiously. "Don't make a mess of it this time—we're out of nearly everything."

"Wely on me, dear boy?"

"There's no need to go as far as Aylesbury," remarked Monty. "There's a village round the corner yonder; I can see the chimneys."

"Betrah go to town, dear boy—it's only a mile, and I shall do that in a few minutes on the bike."

And Arthur Augustus threw an elegant leg over the bicycle and started.

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded with the duties of camping. Monty Lowther brought out the Primus stove, and put in the paraffin—carefully straining it in—a detail which the great Gussy sometimes overlooked when he was in charge of the stove. Then the methylated spirit was poured into the spirit-cock and lighted, and in a minute the stove was burning away merrily. Dighty had filled the kettle at a neighbouring stream, and it was jammed on the stove.

Herries was disposing of the lunch, tethering him on the grass beside the road, after giving him a drink. Tom Merry was grinding coffee, and Blake was washing plates and pans. Monty was regarding the sunset with a critical eye, mentally debating whether the light was suitable for taking photographs.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was wheeling away cheerfully on the dusty road to Aylesbury, with a long list of goods in his pocket which were to be purchased in the town.

On the road he came in sight of a dusty youth wheeling a damaged motor-bike, and recognized Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts was inquiring his way of a passer-

by, who was answering him as Gussy wheeled by.

"Keep on to the signpost, and take the turning there for Western Turpin, and that takes you into the road."

Wendover—"

"How far?" interrupted Cutts.

"About forty miles."

"Oh, wad!"

Cutts had his back to the road as Gussy wheeled by, and he had not observed the woad of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus playfully reached out and tipped Cutts' cap over his eyes as he passed.

Cutts spun round with an enraged exclamation.

Arthur Augustus pedalled on, smiling, and Cutts, recognizing him, rushed in savage pursuit, leaving the motor-bike against a tree. His heavy footsteps rang on the hard road behind Arthur Augustus, who glanced over his shoulder and grinned.

"Were you to Aylesbury, Cutts?" he called back.

"Your young scoundrel!" panted Cutts. "I'll smelt you!"

"Watah!"

Cutts was running hard, anxious for vengeance upon any member of the St. Jim's caravan party, but he had not much chance against a bicycle. He was giving it up, when the bicycle slowed down, Arthur Augustus seeming to have some difficulty with the pedale.

Cutts' eye blazed, and he rushed on again, feeling that vengeance was within his grasp.

He drew closer and closer as the bike slowed, till he was almost able to touch the junior with his outstretched fingers.

"Now, you young wad!" he panted.

Then, to his rage and dismay, the bicycle shot suddenly forward, far out of his reach. The smiling face of Arthur Augustus looked back at him.

"Only pullin' your leg, old top!" called back Gussy, cheerily. "Twy-it again!"

Cutts did not try it again. He stood in the road, shaking his fist furiously, as Arthur Augustus pedalled on merrily to Aylesbury.

"Cutts is watah an ear," murmured Arthur Augustus, as he looked back again.

The dean of the Fifth was striding back to where he had left his motor-bike, giving up the chase of the cyclist as a bad job.

Arthur Augustus pedalled on, and was soon riding into Aylesbury. He looked about him for shops, but was rather dismayed to find that they were closed. He rode on into the market-square, and found the shops there still closed. He jumped off his machine at last, looking round him in puzzled dismay. There was a plump policeman in the square, and Arthur Augustus tackled him.

"Arthur! happened here, offitah!" he inquired. "The shops appear to be shut up."

The policeman looked at him.

"Thursday!" he said.

"Yass, I am wath that it is Thursday," answered Arthur Augustus, rather surprised at being given that apparently superfluous information. "But I was speakin' about the shops. Do they usually close so early in the day?"

"No."

"But they all appear to be closed now."

"Thursday!"

"Yass!"

"Thursday!"

And the policeman walked on, leaving Arthur Augustus blinking after him over his fist.

"Baw, Jova!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "That is a vewy remarkable policeman. Instead of giving a chap



Jack Blake faced the three young rascals, with a flash in his eyes, his lip curling scornfully. "Don't you like the word?" he said. "I'll say it again—swindlers!" (See chapter 3.)

information, he simply repeats the name of the day of the week like a parrot. I wonder if he is potty!"

Arthur Augustus wheeled his machine up, and halted to address a ruddy-complexioned native who was smoking his pipe in the square.

"Pway excuse me," he said politely, "but can you tell me if there are any shops open in Aylshbury?"

The agricultural gentleman removed his pipe.

"No, sir."

"All closed!"

"Thursday!" said the agricultural gentleman.

"But Jove!"

There was a calendar in the St. Jim's caravan, and Arthur Augustus was perfectly well aware that it was Thursday. The information really seemed a little superfluous. He walked on, and tackled another inhabitant.

"Pway can you tell me where there is a grocer's shop open?" he asked.

The man shook his head.

"Thursday!" he answered.

"Oh ewiky!"

Arthur Augustus was almost alarmed.

In answer to the most simple of questions, everyone in Aylshbury seemed to be able only to repeat the name of the day. It was really extraordinary. The swell of St. Jim's began to wonder whether there was lunacy in the air. He closed!

made another attempt, this time selecting a small boy who was promenading the square, with his hands in his pockets, whistling shrilly.

"Are there any shops open in Aylshbury, dear boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

The small boy stared.

"Thursday!" he answered.

"Well, but Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gave up seeking information after that. He looked round for a grocer's shop, and found one, which was closed, like the rest; but he observed that the upper part of the house was used as a dwelling place, and decided that the grocer was probably at home. So he knocked on the door.

He knocked for some time unheeded; but finally a window above was opened, and a fat face and a bald head came into view. The fat face was not looking good-tempered.

"What's the row?" demanded the owner of the face.

"Pway excuse me—"

"What do you want?"

"I want to do some shoppin'—"

"Nonsense!"

"But really, my good sir, I have come back to do some shoppin', and it is wathin' disconcertin' to find all the shops closed," protested Arthur Augustus warmly. "Pway why are the shops

"Thursday!"

"Eh!"

"Thursday!"

Slam! The window closed.

Arthur Augustus blinked up at the window in amazement.

"This is verry remarkable," he murmured. "I verry soon to be dropped into a lunatic asylum. Instead of answerin' my questions, everybody repeats the name of the day like a beestial parrot. Either the people of Aylshbury are a set of verry odd practical jokesters or else they are all potty. I verry think I had better clear off."

And Arthur Augustus cleared off. Evidently there was nothing doing in Aylshbury that afternoon, whatever the mysterious reason was.

CHAPTER 4. Short Commons!

"WELL!" Tom Merry & Co. surrounded Arthur Augustus as he rode up to the caravan camp in the leafy lane. The carrier of his bike was empty, and his pockets were not bulging, and the juniors wondered where the supplies were.

Arthur Augustus dismounted.

"I have had a verry remarkable experience," he said breathlessly.

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"Have you got the grub?" demanded Herrie.

"I have not got the grub, Herrie."

"As!"

"I would be called an ass!" said Arthur Augustus warily. "Is it not my fault that Aylesbury seems to have gone potlay. I have had a very remarkable experience indeed. I found all the shops closed—"

"Well!"

"And everyone I inquired of made an utterly irrelevant reply."

"So!"

"No wonder you inquired, dear boy. It was very remarkable—in fact, it was almost amazing. Instead of waiting for my supplies, the people there expected, like parrots, the same word."

Tom Merry & Co. stood at Arthur Augustus. His statement was so very remarkable that they could not help being astonished.

"Been asleep on your life, and dreaming?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I have not been dreaming, you ass!"

"Well, what's happened then?"

"I asked no end of people for a shop, and they all replied in the same way, without any relevance in their remarks at all," said Arthur Augustus. "They all repeated the same word like parrots."

"My hat!"

"And what was the word?" asked Blake, miserably inquired.

"Wish!" he said with the match at all. "I don't beg; simply the name of a day of the week."

"That!"

"The fabled must have been dreaming!" said Manrose.

"I repeat, Manrose, that I have not been dreaming. It happened just as I have said. Every chap I asked simply said 'Thursday'—just as if that had anything to do with the match."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Well, Tom Merry, I do not see anything to laugh at, in this very remarkable conduct of the inhabitants of Aylesbury."

"Oh, you see!" gasped Tom Merry.

"I suppose Thursday is early closing day in Aylesbury, that's all."

"Who's at?"

"Haven't you ever heard of early closing days, ass?"

"Yess, now I come to think of it, I certainly have, Tom Merry; but I don't see why—"

"Well, fathead, it looks as if Thursday is early closing day in Aylesbury, and as to-day's Thursday, it's not specially mysterious to find the shops closed there. Got that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus reflected.

"Bai Jova! I navvith thought of that!" he confessed. "But really, you know, they might have explained—"

"Perhaps they thought that your brain powers were equal to figuring it out," suggested Monty Lowther. "They couldn't know, of course, that you belong to a noble family, unless you mentioned it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wah!" said Arthur Augustus.

But the smell of St. Jim's was feeling quite relieved. The explanation was a simple one, though it had not occurred to Gussy's mighty brain.

"And now, as Gussy chooses early closing days for shopping, what are we going to have for supper?" inquired Herrie.

"I really did not choose an early closing day, Herrie!"

"We've bagged some eggs at the farm," remarked Blake. "We can

smuggle with them; I've got some kitchen too."

"Let's cook the eggs, then!" said Monty Lowther, feeling that this was a chance too good to be missed.

"Bai Jova! I regard that as a wotten pun, Lowthair, Herrie, I will cook the eggs, if you have got the store goin'—"

"You jolly well won't!" answered Herrie, with emphasis. "We've got only the eggs between us and famine, and you're jolly well not going to monkey about with them."

"If you mean to imply that I cannot cook eggs, Herrie—"

"Baw-waw!"

"Undah the clogs, as Herrie chooses to be impertinent, I shall insist upon cooking the eggs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warily. "I regard all Herrie's remarks as being in the worst of taste."

"Rate!"

Herrie picked up the bag of eggs, to make sure of them. But Arthur Augustus was in earnest. He seized the bag firmly.

"Fwy! let go, Herrie!"

"Leggo, you ass!"

"I insist upon your release! This bag at once, Herrie!"

"You silly chump!"

"Don't break those eggs!" roared Blake. "I've just given four bob for those eggs."

"You hear what Blake says, Herrie. Release this bag."

"Do you want me to punch your silly nose, Gussy?"

"I should rather to have my nose punched, Herrie, with any dice worth a bob. I feel bound to insist upon cooking the eggs."

"Leggo!"

"Wah!"

"I tell you—"

"Wubbish!"

"Look out!" shrieked Tom Merry.

There was a rattling sound. The bag was made of paper, and it really was not designed for a tug-of-war. It parted in the middle.

When the bag parted in the middle, the law of gravitation did the rest. The eggs crashed on the ground.

Smash!

"Oh crumbs!"

"Herrie, you utah ass—"

"Oh, you cross idiot!" yelled Herrie.

"There go the eggs!" roared Blake.

"Oh, you dummy! Bump him!"

"Yess, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I really consider that that conduct is Herrie's right to be bumped!"

"You utah ass!" Yawook! Leggo! Bump! Bump!

It was Arthur Augustus who was bumped—much to his astonishment and indignation. He was bumped in the eggs. It was the only thing they were fit for now, as Lowther remarked.

The caravaniers set about preparing a light—a very light—supper. Arthur Augustus did not help them. Arthur Augustus was engaged, for an hour at least, in scraping fragments of eggs from his trousers, and all the while he was making remarks to his comrades which ought to have withered them. But they did not look at all withered; and they finished supper cheerily, while Gussy was still scraping his hapless legs.

CHAPTER 5.

The Right Turning!

"GRR-UP!" In the sunny summer's morning the St. Jim's caravan turned into the old Roman road that ran northward from Aylesbury, and rolled merrily along.

The caravaniers had breakfasted lightly upon bread and margarine and lettuce—owing to Gussy's great success as a shopper. They looked out for sources of renewed supplies as they progressed with the caravan.

That day they intended to be at the Chilterns, where the next camp was to be fixed. They turned out of the Roman road into the lane to Wendover, and in that village Tom Merry secured a supply of eggs and ham and milk—Gussy not being entranced with the shopping this time. Monty Lowther expressed a fear that please would do early if Gussy was seen coming along—stating this to Gussy in a rather nervous way only called forth a lofty sniff from Arthur Augustus.

"We turn to the right here," announced Arthur Augustus as the caravan rolled on through Weston Turville.

"Left!" said Tom Merry.

Circumstances turned into a lane to the left.

"I remarked that it was right, Tom Merry!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Rascally!"

"Then why have you turned to the left?"

"Because you remarked that it was to the right, of course."

"Wah! Tom Merry, if we can't get to Wendover today—"

"Left is right in this case," explained Monty Lowther. "If we turned to the right we should get left."

"This is not a time for wotten puns, Lowthair, when Tom Merry is taking the wrong road. Where do you expect to get, Tom Merry?"

"Wendover," answered the captain of the Shell, laughing.

"Very well! I really trust you will get to Wendover, that's all!" said Arthur Augustus, with deep sarcasm.

Arthur Augustus's trust seemed well-founded, so far as it was for the caravaniers did get to Wendover. Tom Merry gave him a cheery grin when they rolled into the old town.

"Well, Gussy!" he said.

"Is this Wendover?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Pewaw! it is not Wendover!" suggested Arthur Augustus, looking round.

"I do not see the name anywaa."

"Did you expect to see the place behind?" grinned Herrie.

"Not precisely, Herrie. But I should not be at all surprised if it is not Wendover at all. Probably we have arrived at Buckingham or Leighton."

"Fathead!"

"I will inquired," said Arthur Augustus.

And he inquired of a policeman at the corner of the street. The officer of the law, seemingly a little surprised by the question, assured him that it actually was Wendover. Arthur Augustus appeared quite puzzled as he walked on.

"Well, are you satisfied that we haven't arrived in Glasgow or Dublin?" asked Monty Lowther.

"It is very curious."

"What is curious, fathead?"

"I regard it as very curious that we should have arrived in Wendover and Tom Merry insisted upon taking the 'wrong turnin'."

"It was the right turning!" roared Tom Merry.

"Please do not wear at me, old chap! I have a very strong dislike to being wotted at."

And Arthur Augustus shook his head several times as the caravan progressed through Wendover, still perplexed at the safe arrival after Tom Merry had taken the wrong turning. An explanation of

the mystery seemed to occur to him at last.

"I think I've got it!" he exclaimed. "We must have taken another turnin' without noticin' it, you know."

"Fathrod!" said six caravanners at once.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"This looks like a rather nice inn!" said Manners. "We can stick the 'bus in the yard, and have dinner indoors for once."

"Yeas, wathah!"

Tom Merry looked at the inn. The carriage was through the town now, and the Green Lion was on the outskirts. It was an old-fashioned, red-tiled inn, with a rich green garden and trees and gables, and certainly looked very attractive. Tom nodded assent.

A plump, red-faced innkeeper greeted them politely. The van was stacked in the yard, and the horse taken away to be fed, and the St. Jim's juniors entered the garden of the inn to rest there while their dinner was prepared. From an open French window, looking on the garden, came a click of billiard-balls, and Arthur Augustus glanced at the room.

"They've got billiards beah," he remarked. "We might have a game while we're waitin'. I'll give any of you fellows fifty out of a hundred."

Monty Lowther gave the swell of St. Jim's a look of potentia solemnity.

"Oh, Guasy!" he said.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"We couldn't possibly allow you to go to the bad during the vac," said Lowther, shaking his head. "Where shall we find a guide and model next term at St. Jim's if you indulge in riotous living in the vac?"

"Oh, Guasy!" said Blake.

And there was a shocked chorus:

"Oh, Guasy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his celebrated monocle into his eye, and surveyed his shocked friends in deep indignation.

"You uttah aaaa—" he began.

"Oh, Guasy!"

"I ain not suggestin' anythin' to which exception could be taken, you howlin' duffers! There is no harm in a game of billiards in a respectable place so long as there is no money on the game."

"Oh, Guasy!"

"We have a billiard-room at home, you aaaa! And I have played with cousin Ethel there!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I regard you— What are you grinnin' at, Blake?"

"At you, dear old top!" chuckled Blake. "Only pulling your noble leg, old duffer! Let's go in! Let's see—did you say you would give us a hundred out of fifty up?"

"I said I would give you fifty out of a hundred up."

"Nothing like neck!" remarked Monty Lowther. "Now, I'll tell you what I'll do, Guasy. I'll give you forty-nine out of fifty up, and guarantee that you won't make a single stroke in the game. I begin, of course."

"I do not credit for a moment, Lowthah, that you could make a break of fifty," said Arthur Augustus, with a sniff. "I will take you on, just to show that you are swarlin'."

"'Dood!" said Lowther.

The juniors entered through the French windows. There was no one in the room but the marker, who was knocking the balls about for his own amusement. There was only one table, and the juniors surrounded it, as Monty Lowther took a cue from the marker and chalked it.

"You can't do it, Monty," said Manners. "If I were a betting chap, I'd bet quidlets that you don't run right out."

"Yeas, wathah!"

"I said I'd give Guasy forty-nine out of fifty, and he wouldn't make a stroke in the game," answered Lowther.

"That's the same thing."

"Not quite!"

Monty Lowther placed his ball, and there was a click. His ball rolled into the nearest pocket.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Call that a shot!" grinned Digby.

"Certainly," said Lowther cheerily.

"I've done what I undertook to do. If Guasy had betted, I should have legged his cash. I'm rather sorry now that I kept him to the straight path of rectitude."

"Bal Jove! You have simply potted your own ball!"

"Exactly. You've you!"

"Eh!"

"You take two for my potting my ball, don't you?"

"Ye-aaa!"

"Two to forty-nine is fifty-one, and it was fifty up." The game is over, and you haven't played a stroke."

And Monty Lowther smiled and grounded his cue. Arthur Augustus blinked at him. It took the great Guasy about two minutes to figure it out. Monty Lowther had certainly carried out his contract.

"You uttah aaaa!" said Arthur Augustus, while the juniors chuckled. "It was a catch!"

"Go hon!"

"You were pullin' my leg, you faithful duffer!"

"Well, isn't that what you were born for?" inquired Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! Now, I will give any chap fifty in a hundred—"

Arthur Augustus was interrupted by the entrance of four new comers from the garden. Tom Merry & Co. glanced at them, and combined looks on Gerald Cutts of the Fifth Form at St. Jim's strode in. He was followed by St. Leger, Prye, and Gilmore, also of the St. Jim's Fifth.

CHAPTER 6.

A Little Scrap!

CUTTS of the Fifth started as he saw the juniors. A dark look came over his face and his eyes gleamed. Evidently he had not forgotten the unfortunate meeting of the day before.

"So you're here, you young swamps!" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Cutts—"

"Yeaaa! Here, you old sweep!" said Lowther slyly.

"Then see this young rascal! I told you I met yesterday," said Cutts to his companions. "I told you about their cheek."

"Oh, yeas!" said St. Leger.

"Did you tell them how we bumped you into a ditch?" snorted Herries.

"We're ready to do it again, if you want any more, Cutts."

"Yeas, wathah!"

There were hostile looks between the two parties. Cutts & Co. of the Fifth were the leaders of the "fast set" at St. Jim's, and they had never been on good terms with Tom Merry & Co. They had followers and imitators among the juniors—fellows like Backe and Crook—but their number was few, and Tom Merry & Co. were not among them. Cutts, as he looked over the junior crowd, was palpably meditating an attack; but perhaps he decided that it was more trouble than it was worth, for he did not begin. He turned, and spoke

to his companions in a low voice, and then came towards the table again.

"You fags can clear off!" he snapped.

"You're not wanted here!"

"The same applies to you," remarked Tom Merry. "We're not clearing off at present, Guasy!"

"I want that table!"

"You can go on wanting, dear boy," said Blake. "We've got the table at present, and we mean to keep it till we've done with it!"

"Yeas, wathah!"

Cutts set his lips.

"Clear those kids out of the room, marker!" he said. "We want to play."

The marker coughed.

"These young gentlemen have engaged the table, sir," he answered.

"Well, they can't have it!"

"I'll shove it Weally, Cutts!"

"I'm not bossin' the place, Cutts!" inquired Monty Lowther slyly. "If not, I rather think we're sticking to this table!"

"We are certainly stickin' to it, you bloody wretch!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

Cutts gave the juniors an evil look.

"Marker, bring in two of champagne, and four glasses, and a box of cigars!" he said.

"Yeas!"

"Doozy bouncers!" snorted Herries.

"Now," said Cutts, as the marker left the billiard-room, "you fags are to get out! If you don't go, you'll be put! And share the word!"

"Bala!"

Cutts came nearer to the juniors, and Prye and Gilmore and St. Leger followed him. The four big Fifth-Formers were probably a good match for seven juniors; but the latter were not disposed to yield their ground. Tom Merry & Co. cared little about the billiard-table, so far as that went; but they did not intend to be bullied by Cutts of the Fifth.

"Are you going?" snapped Cutts.

"No fear!"

"Wats!"

"Go and eat cake!"

"Chawd then out!" exclaimed Cutts.

He led with a rush, his right temper quite in the ascendant now. His comrades followed him fast enough. Seven juniors backed up as one man against the rush of the Fifth-Formers.

Monty Lowther had thoughtfully retained his cue. He met Cutts with the butt-end of the cue on his waistcoat.

Cutts gave a gasp, and staggered backwards, almost vinded by the drive.

Lowther followed him up, jabbing at him actively. Cutts was a head taller than the Shell fellow, and Lowther felt entitled to use the cue against so disproportioned an adversary. And he used it with great effect.

St. Leger backed out of the scrap, nearly swallowing in his haste, the cigarette he was smoking. Prye and Gilmore were celled by the juniors, and sent sprawling on the floor.

They roared as they sprawled. Cutts made desperate efforts to dodge the jabbing cue and get at Lowther, but some smart taps on the head and hands stopped him. He yelled to St. Leger.

"Help me! Do you hear!"

St. Leger shook his head.

"I'm not here for scrappin' with fags, dear boy!" he answered. "What do you want to kick up a stindy for by god? Let the fags alone! It was their fault, if they shocked it!"

"Eh!"

"You're dashed polite, Cutts! Let it drop, I tell you!"

"I'll smash them!" roared Cutts.

St. Leger shrugged his shoulders.

"You can play the goat without my help, then," he remarked.

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And he lighted another cigarette and lounged to the window.

Cutte made a furious spring at Lowther, and caught the cue on his head—and then in his hand.

"Buck up!" yelled Lowther.

Cutte tore the cue away, and then grasped Lowther at last. But Frye and Gilmore were on the floor, out of the scrap, and the other juniors rushed to Lowther's aid. Five or six pairs of hands seized Gerald Cutts, and sent him spinning back towards the door that led into the bar.

The door opened at the same moment. A waiter came in with a tray, on which were set the champagne, glasses, and cigars ordered by the reckless blackguard of St. Jim's.

Cutte staggered faintly into him.

"Oh, lor!" gasped the waiter, as the crash came.

Crash!

The tray went sailing, and landed on the floor with a terrific smashing of bottles and glasses. Cutte bumped on the waiter. That gentleman staggered back through the doorway, and Cutte sat down.

"Oh ewikee!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Cutte's brow danced. Another waiter looked in through the garden door.

"Gentlemen, lunch is ready!"

"That's our lunch!" grinned Blake. "Cutte, old top, you can have the table now. Don't mind the champagne—it's healthier outside than inside!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. moved off as Cutte scrambled to his feet, white with rage. He had the champagne to pay for as well as the breakages, and he was not at all consoled by the reflection that such a drink was better for the health outside than inside. He shouted to his companions, and rushed furiously at the juniors.

St. Leger only gave a shrug, and Frye and Gilmore grunted. They had had enough of scrapping with fags. Cutte rushed on to the attack—alone. One fellow was not much use against seven juniors. Gerald Cutts was seized on all sides and bumped on the floor. Once, twice, thrice he smote the floor, and as he sat panting and spluttering Monty Lowther playfully jammed a cue down his back. Then Tom Merry & Co. went into the garden chortling, leaving Cutts of the Fifth gasping and spluttering on the floor.

A table had been set in the garden under a big apple-tree, and the caravanners sat down very cheerfully to lunch there. Gerald Cutts did not follow them out. Apparently the dandy of the Fifth had had enough—for the present, at least.

CHAPTER 7.

Fallen Among Thieves!

"HERE'S GUSSEY!"
The caravanners were asking that question about an hour later.

After lunch the chums of St. Jim's had strolled about the inn garden for a time, taking it easy, it being agreed that they were to have coffee under the trees before starting on the road again. Now the inn waiter had brought out the coffee, and the juniors had gathered to dispose of it; but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had not turned up with the rest.

The Co. disposed of the coffee while they waited for Gussey to appear; but Gussey did not appear. Tom Merry called to the waiter at last, and inquired if he had seen the missing junior.

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"In this billiard-room, I think, sir!" was the unexpected reply.

"What is the duffer doing there?" grunted Blake. "Can't be watching those Fifth Form cads rökking one another, I suppose?"

"Let's see!"

The juniors walked to the French windows of the billiard-room. They had intended to entertain themselves for a while there with knocking the balls about; but they had given up that intention after the arrival of Cutts & Co. Cutts and his nutty friends had taken possession of the room, and were making the atmosphere smoky enough; and the juniors did not care to seek their shady society.

To the surprise of the six, there was Arthur Augustus, and he was not looking on at the game. He was playing, and his opponent was Gerald Cutts!

Tom Merry & Co. could only stare.

Cutte stood, cue in hand, resting it on the floor while he watched Arthur Augustus taking his shot. Frye and Gilmore were looking on with smiling faces, smoking cigarettes. St. Leger was lounging in a window, with a bored expression on his handsome face. St. Leger was the least blackguardly of the four, though under Cutts' influence he was not much better than the rest.

"Good shot, kid!" said Cutte approvingly, as the swell of St. Jim's made his stroke.

"Yass, washab—not so bad!"

"Gussy!" roared Blake wrathfully.

Arthur Augustus looked round.

"Bai Jove! Coffee weaky yet!"

"The coffee's inside, and your coffee's cold!" said Tom Merry. "What are you doing here, you ass?"

"I was here, do not interrupt me!"

Arthur Augustus made another shot, and scored a miss; and Cutts came to the table. Arthur Augustus chafed his cue thoughtfully. Tom Merry & Co. came into the room, perturbed and angry.

"What are you up to?" demanded Blake, jerking Arthur Augustus by the shoulder.

"Pway do not be a wuff ass, Blake! Cutte was swankin' that he could beat me at billiards, so I took him on!"

"And what's on the game?" growled Herries.

"Naturally, Hewwies, we are playin' for love! I pswems you do not suppose that I should play billiards for money?"

"Oh!" said Blake, rather taken aback.

It puzzled him that Gerald Cutts should take the trouble to play simply as a game of skill, for it was hardly in the Fifth-Former's line. And he must have had some motive for assuming friendliness towards the swell of St. Jim's after the tussle they had taken place in the billiard-room. Blake could guess exactly how much friendliness the dandy of the Fifth felt.

"Well, we're ready to start!" said Tom Merry.

"Pway wait a few minutes, deah boys! I am at ninety, and Cutte is only fifty. I shall wun out when I play again!"

"Blessed if I expected to find you so pally with Cutte!" grunted Blake.

"I am not exactly pally with Cutte, Blake; but I do not see why I should not take him down a peg at billiards!"

"And there's nothing on the game!" said Manners.

"Of course not!"

Frye and Gilmore exchanged a curious look, and strolled away to join St. Leger at the window. Cutts did not seem to bear the remarks of the juniors. He was playing away in great style—playing so well, indeed, that it was remarkable that Gussy had got ahead of him at all. Tom Merry & Co. stood looking on, waiting for the game to finish.

Cutte of the Fifth looked like running out with a break. The score was creeping up, and Arthur Augustus looked a little peculiar when Cutts passed his own figure of ninety. The Fifth-Former kept on steadily, making a succession of easy cannons, leaving the balls placed for cannons with a skill which was evidence of a mispent youth. He ran out over the hundred without the slightest difficulty.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Who's been taken down a peg!" inquired Monty Lowther blandly.

"Ahem!"

Cutte looked at Arthur Augustus with a smile.

"Tis your luck again!" he said genially. "I'm willing to make it double or quits."

"I should be very pleased to try again, Cutts, but these fellows are waitin' for me. I do not quite understand your remark about double or quits!"

"I mean, make it a tenner on another game, instead of paying up the fiveer you've lost on this game!"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"The—the what?" he ejaculated.

"The fiveer."

"But I have not lost a fiveer on this game, Cutts, as we were not playin' for money!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in perplexity. "I have not lost anything at all, you know!"

"Lesser says for the table," said Blake.

"Yass! But Cutts was sayin'—"

Cutte put down his cue, and fixed a

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Arthur Augustus halted to address a ruddy-complexioned native who was smoking his pipe in the square. "Pway excuse me," he said politely. "Are there any shops open in Aylesbury?" (See Chapter 3.)

very unpleasant glance upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"No rot!" he said. "If you don't care for another game, pay up, and let me get on! Prye's waiting for a game."

"But I do not owe you anythin', Cutts!"

"You owe me five pounds!"

"Nothin' of the kind!"

"Did you win the game, then?"

"No, you won the game, Cutts. It is wathah surpwin', but it is certainly the fact. But we were not playin' for money. I wogard playin' for money as wotten bad form, and I should certainly nevah be guilty of it!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly.

Cutts gave a bitter sneer.

"Not quite such bad form as refusing to pay up when you lose!" he said.

"You're a swindlin' young swindler!" Arthur Augustus flushed crimson.

"How dare you call me a swindlah!" he exclaimed. "Nothin' whatever was said about money on the game, and I should have refused to play for money, Cutts!"

"There was five pounds on the game!" "I appeal to the markah!" exclaimed

Arthur Augustus. "Markah, was anythin' said about money on the game?"

"I was in the bar when you began playin', gents," said the marker, rubbing his nose. "I don't know nothing about it."

"Prye said Gilmore were heah," said Arthur Augustus. "So were you, St. Leger. I demand your evidence on this point!"

"Leave me out!" jawned St. Leger. "I know nothin' about it—wasn't even lookin' at you!"

"You othah fellows—"

"Oh, what's the good of rottin'!" said Prye. "Pay up and look pleasant, as you've lost!"

"He's a sport!" advised Gilmore.

"I would certainly pay up if I had lost money, even on a wascally bet!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly. "But there was no bet—I should have refused a bet."

"You've appealed to Prye and Gilmore," said Cutts drily. "I'll leave it to them. They were present. I'll leave it to them. They were present."

"Well, I certainly understood that the game was for five pounds!" said Prye. "I fail to see what can have given you

that impression, Prye, as nothin' whatever was said about money!"

Tom Merry & Co. were silent. That Arthur Augustus would play for money they knew was highly improbable; and that he would repudiate a just debt was impossible. It looked like a misunderstanding; but some of the juniors suspected that there was more of a twinkle than a misunderstanding about it. The guileless Gussy had fallen among thieves.

Arthur Augustus looked excited and distressed. He turned to Gilmore as his last hope, as it were.

"Gilmore! You know vevy well—" "That the game was for a five!" said Gilmore, with a nod. "Exactly." Cutts had just played with me for a five, and you agreed to play a game on the same terms!"

"Cutts gave you forty in the hundred," said Arthur Augustus. "He agreed to give me forty. They were the same terms I was allied to. I did not know you were playin' for money!" Gilmore shrugged his shoulders.

"Any year is better than none if you don't want to pay up, I suppose!" he said. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 600.

said, "I'm surprised at this in you, though, D'Arcy! I should not have expected it!"

"I tell you I was not awah you were playin' for money!"

"What the blum did you think we were playin' for, then!"

"For the game, of course!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Well, are you gahn' to square, now that it's settled that you've been playin' for a free, D'Arcy?" asked Cutts of the Fifth unpleasantly.

Arthur Augustus drew a deep breath.

"It appears to be a misunderstanding," he said. "I certainly never intended to play for money. But undah the cires, as you appear to have thought so, I will pay the cash!"

A quick look was exchanged among Cutts and Gilmore and Frye as Arthur Augustus' handsome little Roman-looking pocket-book came into sight. They had not been mistaken in supposing that Lord Eastwood's son was well provided with cash on his holiday, and these little schemes for haggling some of the cash seemed to have succeeded perfectly. But there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, as Cutts & Co. were destined to discover. Jack Blake strode forward to Arthur Augustus was setting out a five-pound note, and grasped him by the arm.

"Stop it!" he said curtly.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Stop it!"

"I am gahn' to pay Cutts, Blake—"

"You're not going to pay him anything! You're coming slight out of here, and away from this sort of swindler!" answered Blake stoutly.

CHAPTER 8.

Looking After Gussy!

"SWINDLERS!"

Gerald Cutts gasped out that unpleasant word, his face flushing scarlet. Cutts seemed to find the word more unpleasant than the fact, somehow.

"Swindlers!" shouted Frye. "You cheeky little rot!"

"You insolent young blackguard!" roared Gilmore.

Jack Blake faced the three young rascals with a flash in his eye, his lip curling scornfully.

"Don't you like the word?" he said. "I'll say it again—swindlers! You'll get used to it—swindlers! Like it again? Swindlers!"

Jack Blake came from Yorkshire, and rather prided himself on directness of speech. Certainly his speech was direct enough now. There was no possibility of mistaking his meaning.

"Blake—" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Put your money away! Can't you see you've been diddled!" exclaimed Blake angrily. "The three of them are in the game together. They knew you wouldn't play for money, and they've fixed it up among them to get you into a game, and make out afterwards that there was money on it!"

"Rot, rot!"

"It really does look like it," said Tom Merry slowly, and Cutts heard you tell us, when we came in, that there was nothing on the game. It wasn't finished then, and he could have stopped."

"I wasn't paying attention to your chatter!" snapped Cutts.

"You heard it, all the same."

"And it doesn't alter the fact that D'Arcy has lost five pounds, and is swindled if he doesn't square!" exclaimed Cutts savagely.

"I am gahn' to square, you utch wretch! I half-suspect that you have

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been diddled me, but I am gahn' to pay up!"

"You're not!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Keep your money in your pocket, you see!" said Dicky. "It's plain enough that it was a put-up job from the beginning."

"Yes, rather!" said Monty Lowther emphatically.

"I dare say Cutts wants your money to pay for his boom and smokes," said Herries bitterly. "Well, he's not gahn' to have it!"

"Weally, Howie—"

"I agree with Blake," said Tom Merry. "You ought not to pay them, Gussy. It's a swindle!"

"A palpable swindle," said Manners. "Come on, Gussy. The horse is waiting with the caravan."

"Yes, but—"

"Come on!" snapped Blake. "Fray do not hurwy me, Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "There is no occasion to get excited. I feel that I have been 'dealin' with unscrupulous fellows, and I am ashamed to own them as St. Jim's chaps. But, undah the cires, I feel bound to pay, giv'n Cutts the benefit of the doubt."

"You can give him the benefit of as many doubts as you like, but you're not going to give him a five-pound note!" retorted Blake.

"Weally, you know—"

"I'm wakin'!" said Cutts disagreeably. "I don't usually have all this trouble in collection, a lot from a loan—"

"I am gahn' to pay you, Cutts!"

"You're not!" said Blake. "We won't let you! See!"

"I am such you mean well, Blake, but I cannot allow you to overwise my decision," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Undah the cires, I am gahn' to pay Cutts, at the same time expressin' the scorn I feel for him."

"This way!" was Blake's reply.

"Please welvise my arm, Blake—"

"When you're in the caravan—not before!"

"I refuse to go—"

"Come on, Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "You're not going to pay Cutts anything! We can't see you swindled under our nose, you know."

"I insist—"

"Take hold of his ears!" said Blake.

"You utch doffs!" shouted Arthur Augustus in this match!

"Your mistake—you're not!" retorted Blake. "You can look upon yourself as a tame inmate, and us as your keepers."

"I refuse to do anything of the kind. I insist upon payin' Cutts. I shall not allow that wretch to be able to pretend that I have welvish him!"

"That's what you're trying to do!" sneered Cutts.

"You hear him, Blake! I insist upon payin' him!"

"You silly ass! He's only trying to bully money out of you! Look here, are you coming?"

"Don't tell I have paid Cutts!"

"You've just been yanked away! Lead a hand, fellows!"

"Hear, hear!"

Cutts made a stride forward as Study No. 6 hustled Arthur Augustus, vainly resisting, to the door. Tom Merry and Manners faced round at him, and Cutts passed. The Terrible Three of the Shell were quite ready to handle him.

"Come on, if you like!" said Tom Merry contemptuously.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" murmured the marker.

"So you're lookin' up that young cad in welvish me!" sneered Cutts.

"That's a lie!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully, "and you know it, Cutts! You're trying to swindle D'Arcy, and you're stopping you!"

"D'Arcy's abouted Gussy."

Arthur Augustus was passing through the doorway into the garden, gently but firmly persuaded by the group of Blake & Co. He was resisting, but his chum were not to be argued with. Gussy had to go.

"I will pay you another five, Cutts!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You can see that these fellows are ferocious—"

"A pretty account!" sneered Cutts. "Get up for my benefit, of course. You young swindler!"

Arthur Augustus parted.

"You hear him, you fellows? I insist upon payin' him, welvise me!"

"Blimey! Gussy, hear out!"

"Welvise!" jeered Cutts.

"Stop that rot's mouth, Tom Merry, you ass!" snapped Blake.

"What-ho!" said Tom.

The Terrible Three made a rush at Gerald Cutts. The steady of the Fifth put up his hands, calling to Gilmore and Frye for aid. But, before his comrades could reach him, Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had him over, and he was bumped on the floor.

The Terrible Three left him there, and followed the Fourth's screams into the garden. They covered the retreat, as it were; but there was no pursuit on the part of Cutts & Co. With rather indignant looks and a very flushed face Arthur Augustus was escorted to the caravan. The lamp was harnessed, and all was ready for the start.

"You—you utch wretch!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I insist—"

"Come on!"

"I refuse to come on! I—"

"Chuck him into the van!" growled Blake.

"I shall welvise to stay in the van! I insist—Wawoooh!"

Arthur Augustus was lifted into the van, and Herries followed him in and sat upon him. And, with the swell of St. Jim's in that extremely uncomfortable situation, the caravanners started on the road.

CHAPTER 9.

A Hot Case!

TOM MERRY & Co. were looking and feeling rather ruffled as the caravan rolled on its way. The

encounter with Cutts of the Fifth had left an unpleasant taste in their mouths. It had given them a glimpse, as it were, of a dingy side of life which had been quite absent from their minds while they tramped cheerily with the caravan on sunny roads and leafy lanes.

But the sunshine and the wind on the hills drove away the unpleasant taste at last. Not till the van was a mile out of Wendover was Arthur Augustus allowed his liberty. Then he looked out of the van, and for some time made crushing remarks to his comrades, to which they paid no heed. They were willing to let Gussy blow off steam, as Blake expressed it, as long as he lived.

Arthur Augustus dropped from the van at last, and walked with the caravanners with a frown upon his noble brow. He felt that he had been treated with disrespect, which, of course, was a serious matter to the great Gussy.

"Feelin' better now you've given your chin some exercise, old scout?" asked Lowther affably.

Arthur Augustus smiled.

It was really too hard for his crooked remarks to be looked upon simply as light exercise.

"Hun ahead on the bike and look out for a camp for us, Gussy," suggested

Tom Merry. "We're camping right on the Chilterns to-night."

"Wata!"

"Ahem!"

"Look heah, you fellows," said Arthur Augustus, with deep seriousness, "I regard it as necessary for me to pay Cutts that feak."

"Boah!"

"I agree that it is quite poss. that those wogals were in a gaise togethah to spoof me, but it is quite poss. that it was a misunderstandin'."

"Rat!"

"If you characwise my remarks as wot, Blake—"

"Utter rot, old chap!"

"I refuse to allow Cutts to have it in his powah to say that I was a losah who wouldn't pay up."

"Never mind what Cutts says, old top. He's only a swindling blackguard, anyhow!"

"But I do mind, Blake."

"Well, you can mind, if you like; but you're not going to pay that shidy blackguard a penny!"

"It is weally my own bimzey, Blake."

"Not at all. Ain't we your keepers?" demanded Blake.

"You uttah see!" roared Arthur Augustus, in great wrath. "I refuse to regard you as my keepahs!"

"Don't roar at me, Gussy!"

"What!"

"It weally throws me into a flintah, you know, when a fellah roars at me," said Blake, with a delightful imitation of Arthur Augustus' own special accent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you uttah see!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I refuse to continue this discuss, Blake!"

"Well, it's about time your lower jaw had a rest!" agreed Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus smiled, and unhooked the bike from the van. Tom Merry nodded approval.

"That's right, Gussy! Go ahead and pick out a camp," he said—"and in a farmyard, or on somebody's lawn! Go ahead!"

"Wata!"

Arthur Augustus mounted the bike, and pushed on past the caravan. Then, to the surprise of his comrades, he circled round the van and pedalled back the way they had come.

"Where are you going?" roared Blake. "We're not going back that way!"

"Wata!"

"Where are you going, you see!" shrieked Blake, running after the cyclist.

"Wendover, deah boy!"

"Who's at fer?" gasped Blake.

"To pay Cutts!"

"Why, you—"

Jack Blake put on a desperate spurt to overtake the wily Gussy, but Arthur Augustus drew at his pedals and shot easily ahead. He looked back, waved his hand to his exasperated comrades, and smiled, and then whizzed away in the direction of Wendover at great speed.

The St. Jim's caravan stopped, and Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another with great exasperation. Blake shook a wretched flat after the vanishing cyclist.

"Wogal our leg, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "That's what he took the van for. And we thought he was coming to pick out a camp. Why, ha, ha, ha!"

"Wata!"

Blake failed Jack Blake.

"Who'd have suspected Gussy of being so wily!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Can't be helped now."

"Fools and their money are soon parted!" remarked Manners sententiously.

Blake checked his gate.

"He's not going to pay Cutts!" he exclaimed. "Why, it was a swindle that wouldn't have taken in a halcy! Gussy's got more money than is good for him, but he's not going to waste it on Cutts. Won't those rascals chortle if they get a ster out of Gussy!"

"Well, he's gone. We haven't another bike with us, and the van can't catch up a bike. We're done, Blake!"

"Blake gave an angry growl.

"I'll stop him somehow."

"You can't, old top!" said Lowther, with a grin. "Hallo, here's another of those dashed motors! Hold the gee!"

Hoist-hoist!

A car came buzzing down the steep road, with a young man in khaki seated in it driving. Blake made a jump into the road, and held up his hand. The officer looked at him, and slowed down.

"What's the matter—road up?" he asked, evidently puzzled at being stopped on the road by the caravan.

"No, I—"

"Then what the dickens have you stopped me for—hay!"

"You're going into Wendover!"

"You."

"I want a lift."

"Hay!"

"Will you give me a lift into Wendover?" gasped Blake. "It's important—really important—or I wouldn't ask you. I'm sorry to delay you. I know it's a check, but—"

The officer in the car simply blinked at Blake.

"Check!" he repeated. "Yes, I should say it was a check—yes, a little!"

"But it's important."

"Well, you deserve a lift for your nerve," said the young man in khaki, bursting into a laugh. "Jump in!"

"Thanks!" gasped Blake.

He jumped in, and the car whizzed on again. Tom Merry & Co. blinked after it.

"Well, of all the nerve!" stammered Tom.

"Nothing like neck!" said Monty Lowther, laughing. "I suppose we'd better wait here for them."

"Not a bad idea," said Manners thoughtfully. "I can get one or two views of the Chilterns from here, and it's a good light."

And Manners of the Shell extracted his camera from the van.

Meanwhile, Blake was whizzing on back to Wendover at a rate that nearly took his breath away. Outside the town he passed a dusty cyclist, pedalling industriously away. Arthur Augustus nearly fell off his bike at the sight of Jack Blake in the car.

"Bai Jove!" Blake heard him ejaculate as the car swept by.

The young man in khaki glanced round from his wheel.

"Where do you want to drop?"

"The Green Lion—there it is."

The car slowed down, and Blake sighted within a dozen yards of the inn. He was beginning to thank his benefactor, when the car leaped forward again and vanished into Wendover. Blake walked into the inn. He was waiting there, when a dusty cyclist rode up and dismounted.

"Hallo, Gussy!" said Blake affably.

Arthur Augustus gave his chum a freezing glance through his monocle.

"I weally fail to understand why you have followed me in this ridiculous way, Blake," he said coldly.

"To stop you from playing the goat!" explained Blake.

"I refuse to be stopped—I mean, I am not thinkin' of playin' the goat, you see! I am goin' to settle with Cutts."

"You're jolly well not!" said Blake grimly.

"Wata! Waitah!" said Arthur Augustus, as the ruddy-complexioned waiter appeared in the office. "Waitah, are those—ahem!—gentlemen still in the billiard-rooms?"

"No, sir!"

"Where are they?"

"Gone, sir."

"Eh?"

"Mr. St. Leger's car took them away about half an hour ago, sir," said the waiter.

"Oh, crumblah!"

Arthur Augustus stood unplanned. Cutts & Co. were gone—whether, he knew not. Jack Blake chuckled, and walked out of the inn yard to the bike. While Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still reflecting in perplexity, Jack Blake mounted the bike and rode away.

The whir of the machine attracted Gussy's attention, and he ran out.

"Blake—"

"Good-bye-ee!"

"I am widin' back on that bike!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Your mistake, old top—I am!" answered Blake.

And he peddled away cheerfully. And Arthur Augustus, with feelings that could have been expressed in no language but German, started on a tramp of two miles to rejoin the caravaners.

CHAPTER 10.

A Question of Dig!

"HERE'S Blake!"

"Where's Gussy?"

Jack Blake rode up to the halted caravan and jumped off the bicycle.

"Gussy's following on," he explained. "I looked back and saw him. He's a bit dusty, and looks rather cross. I think it will very likely do him good."

"But what's happened?" inquired Dig.

Blake explained what had happened, and the caravaners roared. Arthur Augustus' obstinacy had landed him with a two-mile tramp on a dusty road, and the caravaners agreed that he deserved it. They sat on the grassy bank beside the road, to wait for the swell of St. Jim's to come up.

Arthur Augustus appeared in sight at last.

His noble face was red with exertion and warmth, and he certainly looked cross. The road was a little steep; there was a blaze of sunshine, and there was plenty of dust turned up by passing carts, as well as a lingering scent of petrol along the road. Altogether, Arthur Augustus was not enjoying his walk.

He was gasping a little as he came limping up, and the perspiration was trickling down his noble countenance.

"You've kept us waiting, Gussy!" said Blake, in a tone of gentle reproach. "We shan't get far this afternoon at this rate."

"Wata!"

"I suppose Gussy is going to apologise for waiting our time like this!" remarked Manners.

"Wubbish!"

"Gussy is rattly!" said Tom Merry, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

"I am not watty, Tom Merry; but I am indignant and disgusted!" said Arthur Augustus hotly. "My personal freedom has been interfered with."

"Potty people are always kept under control!" murmured Lowther. "It's for their own good, you know."

"I regard that remark as impertinent, Lowthak."

"Fan me, somebody!" gasped Lowther. "I'm going to faint!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are pleased to be mewy!" said

Arthur Augustus, with a look of burning indignation at his comrades. "I see no cause whatever for wild merriment. I have, been treated with gross disrespect."

"Ready?" asked Herries.
"You are intewruptin' me, Hewwies." Herries nodded.

"You have to be interrupted sooner or later, Gussy," he explained.

"I regard you as a cheeky ass, Hewwies!"

"Good! Now let's get on."

Arthur Augustus did not move. He was fanning his face with his straw hat.

"I am not ready to get on yet," he said. "If you proceed now, you fellows, you will proceed without me."

"Eh!"

"I have to considah vew sewiously whethah I can remain a membah of this party consistently with my dig."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I suppose we'd better make up our minds to camp here," said Jack Blake.

"I can see that Gussy is wound up."

"Actually grumbling at his old pals for looking after him!" said Dagby.

"I refuse to be looked aftah. Befoah we go any farther, I desah to be distinctly undahstand that I refuse to be looked aftah. I trust," said Arthur Augustus warmly, "that I am capable of lookin' aftah myself. As a fellow of tact and judgment—the only one heah, in fact—I have wedged it as my duty to look aftah the rest of the party. I refuse most emphatically to have the posish reversed in this way. I wedged it as time for me to put my foot down!"

"Can we start now?" asked Blake meekly.

"No. I have not finished yet."

"Oh crickey!"

"If you don't listen to my observations with sewiousness and respect, you had better proceed, and I will wete from the party. If I remain in charge of you—"

"In—in charge of us!" stutered Tom Merry.

"Yas, wathah! I have wedged myself as bein' in charge of this party, as the only fellow heah with any brains to speak of."

"Pleah!"

"Go on, Gussy!" said Mony Lowther encouragingly. "This beah 'Chuckles' hollow. Sing on, sweet bird!"

"Wats! If I remain in charge of this caravanin' party, I insist upon bein' treated with respect; and I uttably refuse to be looked aftah."

"Then you mustn't walk ahead of the van," said Lowther.

"Why not, pway?"

"Because if you do we can't help looking after you. We haven't our eyes in the back of our heads, you know."

"This is not a time for jokin', Lowther!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"My mistake; I thought it was," said the humorist of the Shell bandy.

"Blessed if Gussy oughtn't to be in the House of Commons," said Herries. "He can talk for hours without a word of sense all the time!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Hadh't we better start!" inquired Manners.

"I am not yet weady to start. I feel bound, undah the circe, to make some conditions. I refuse to be treated with disrespect. I uttably refuse to be looked aftah. I insist upon payin' Cutts a fivah—"

"Rats!"

"And I will only proceed with you on one condition!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly.

"Name it, old top!" smiled Blake.

"Cutts is stayin' with St. Leger, at St. Leger Lodge, which is in the Chilterns somewhat—probably not far from heah. I request you to head for St. Leger Lodge—"

"What on earth for?"

"So that I can see Cutts and settle with him," said Arthur Augustus firmly.

"Six voices replied in chorus: "Rats!"

"You refuse my request?"

"Yes, rather! Don't be an ass, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus' eye gleamed through his eyeglasses.

"Vew well," he said. "I am sorry to part company with you—"

"What?"

"I am vew sorry to leave you to your own wackles devices. But a fellow's personal dig comes first. Pway proceed, and I will remain heah."

"Going to camp out on the road on your lonely own?" asked Jack Blake sarcastically.

"You need not trouble your head about me, Blake. You may proceed!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Look here, fathead—"

"I refuse to be called a fathead, Blake."

"Ass, then!" said Blake. "Look here, ass! We're going on now, and you're coming along. See?"

"Will you proceed to St. Leger Lodge, so that I can call on Cutts?"

"No!" roared Blake.

"Then I have the honah of wishin' you a vew good-afternoon!" said Arthur Augustus firmly.

The caravaners blinked at Arthur Augustus. Gussy was on the high horse now with a vengeance. It was probable that his wrath would not last very long—it seldom did—but for the present there was no doubt that the Honourable Arthur Augustus was very much on the high horse.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry at last.

"Oh, let's get on!" grunted Herries. "Gussy can walk after us, and join us when we camp, if he has a fancy for standing around here for a while."

"I shall not walk aftah you, Hewwies!"

"Come on, Gussy!" urged Dig.

"I refuse to come on, Dig!"

"Suppose we pitch him into the van?" suggested Lowther. "Herries can sit on him, the same as before."

The caravaners chuckled. Arthur Augustus backed away, and pushed up his cuffs.

"I warn you that there will be trouble!" he said.

"Oh, come on!" said Herries. "Geep-up, old boah!"

Circumstances moved on, and the caravan rumbled after him. Herries did not take Gussy's lofty attitude very seriously. Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another in perplexity. What was to be done was a mystery, as Gussy did not intend to come down from his high horse yet. The caravan rumbling along the road settled the doubtful point.

"Well, Gussy, you follow us when you're tired of sulking," said Blake.

"You uttah ass, I am not sulkin'!"

"We'll camp a couple of miles farther on," said Tom Merry. "There's a wood there, according to the map; you know the place, Gussy. You'll find us there."

"I shall certainly not find you there!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats!"

"We'll have supper ready for you, old scout!" called back Blake.

And the caravaners tramped on after the van. Arthur Augustus remained standing in the road—alone in his glory.

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Evidently it was St. Leger's car, Cutts, St. Leger, Frye, and Gilmore were in it, a liveried chauffeur driving.

Cutts of the Fifth rapped out a word to the driver, and the car slowed down in the road. It backed and turned, and came gliding back to where Arthur Augustus stood.

The coach of St. Jim's stood his ground. He had anticipated trouble with the blades of the Fifth, but he would not so far depart from his lofty dignity as to retreat. Besides, he wanted to see Cutts, to settle the troublesome affair of the fever. This chance meeting gave him the opportunity. Gerald Cutts was whispering to St. Leger as the car glided back, and that bored youth nodded a lazy assent to his whispered remarks. When the car stopped, Cutts of the Fifth jumped out, and his looks were not at all hostile. Arthur Augustus eyed him rather warily, but Cutts wore a genial smile, and his nod was very friendly. Finding Arthur Augustus alone, away from the other caravanners, was rather a "catch" for Gerald Cutts.

"Hallo, kid!" he said cheerily. "On your own?"

"Yess."

"Can we give you a lift?"

Arthur Augustus hesitated.

"You are very kind, Cutts. But—"

"My dear kid, if you want a lift, say so, and it will be a pleasure to us," said the Fifth-Former calmly. He was watching Arthur Augustus' troubled countenance very keenly as he spoke, and it was not difficult for Cutts to read there that Gussy's present attitude was due to "trouble" among the caravanners. Remembering the scene in the billiard-room at the inn, Cutts was at no loss to guess something very near the facts. "Havo you been left behind?"

"Well, we'll run you after your caravan if you like."

"Possibly," yawned St. Leger, who was taking his cue from Cutts.

"I—I am very much obliged to you, Cutts," said Arthur Augustus, colouring. "But—but I am not going to witness the caravan."

Cutts nodded. Gussy's reply confirmed his surmise.

"On your own, then?" he asked.

"Yess." Arthur Augustus felt for his pocket-book. "I have the fresh beef, Cutts, and I am ready to settle—"

Cutts shook his head.

"My dear chap, not the least in the world," he answered. "It was a misunderstanding about that bet on the game, and I'm sorry—truly sorry—that I spoke rather hastily at the inn. I shall not take it!"

"Has Jove!"

Arthur Augustus blinked at the Fifth-Former. Cutts had been keen enough on bagging the fever at the inn. The unsuspecting Gussy could not guess that Cutts' plans had undergone a change, owing to his discovery that Gussy had parted with his comrades after "trouble." Gerald Cutts had more than a solitary fever in his mind's eye now. Lord Eastwood's son was likely to be worth much more than that to him, if Cutts could manage him—and Cutts thought that he could.

"Put it away, my boy," said Cutts, in a low voice. "You never do have a fever on the game, do you?"

"Not at all. But—"

"That settles it. You owe me a lift."

"I—I would wath—," stammered Arthur Augustus.

"Not at all? I refuse!" said Cutts.

"That it all, we've more of honour, it happens? Now, kid, it seems that you're

on your own. St. Leger, you were sayin'!

St. Leger was staring at the landscape, when Cutts spoke in a significant tone. The somewhat vacant-minded youth was called to order, as it were, by his master's voice.

"Yes, certainly!" he said, with a nod to Arthur Augustus. "Jump into the car, kid!"

"But—"

"You seem to be rather stranded," said St. Leger, with a smile. "Come along to my show for to-night."

"Has Jove!"

"Dash it all, you're miles from everywhere!" said Cutts; "and you don't seem to have any baggage, either!"

"I—I—it was left in the van."

"Well, we can lend you some things," said Cutts, smiling. "We'll all be jolly glad to have you at the Lodge, D'Arcy!"

"Oh!"

"Of course, it's a bit quiet there," said Cutts, with a hidden wink at his comrades. "St. Leger's got a little party on his own—his pater's in Germany, you know. Very quiet. But you won't mind that—"

"Not at all," said Arthur Augustus, much relieved to hear that it was "very quiet" at St. Leger Lodge. He could not help having suspected the reverse.

"You are very kind. It would certainly be wathin' decency to put up at an inn without any baggage—"

"Dash it all, it would be insulkin' to St. Leger if you put up at an inn, with his house only a mile away!" said Cutts warmly. "Jump in, old chap!"

"Yess, do!" urged St. Leger.

"Plenty of room," said Gilmore.

Arthur Augustus hesitated—and it was said of old that he who hesitates is lost. There was something very flattering in so much genial attention to a junior from a party of seniors of the Fifth. And

the airy refusal of the fever was reassuring, as well as an apology for the "quietness" at the Lodge. Arthur Augustus would never willingly have

joined the society of a set of gambling playing rascals; but it was not a difficult matter to pull the wool over Gussy's unsuspecting eyes.

Cutts drew him towards the car while he still hesitated, and Arthur Augustus stepped in. With great politeness the Fifth-Former made room for him.

"Home!" yawned St. Leger, to the chauffeur.

The car buzzed on.

CHAPTER 12.

Gussy's Good-bye.

"**T**IME Gussy was here!" Jack Blake made that remark a daily necessity.

The caravan was camped on the edge of a wood that bordered the road, and a fire of sticks and twigs cast a ruddy glare into the deepening shadows. Circumstances were cropping the grass at the end of his tether, with great contentment. And supper was ready.

Not one of the caravanners doubted that Arthur Augustus, on reflection, would follow the van. Probably they would have been right, but for Gussy's unexpected meeting with Cutts and his party. Of that meeting, naturally, the juniors knew and suspected nothing.

It was really a nice supper that was ready—rashers and sausages and chips and fried cabbage, and beautiful slices of ham and other delicacies. It was a supper calculated to restore Gussy's good-humour when he came in, fatigued and hungry. And while they were preparing it, the caravanners expected every moment to hear his footsteps on the road.

But he did not come.

Supper was ready, and Blake went out into the darkened road to look for Gussy. He came back with a rather sombre face.

"No sign of him!" he grunted.

"The ass!" said Dig.

"He'll come along when he's hungry enough!" suggested Herries.

"Better have supper anyway," was Master's opinion. "We'll keep Gussy's box for him."

The caravanners sat down round the fire to supper, but Blake was in rather a worried mood. He was beginning to wonder whether it was an certainty, after all, that the offended swell of St. Jim's would follow the van.

Supper was finished, and the caravanners washed up, Gussy's supper still keeping hot by the fire. Circumstances had lain down in the grass to sleep, and the vanners were ready to follow his example, but they were thinking about their own show.

"The ass!" said Blake, a dozen times at least. "I'll jolly well punch his nose when he does come! The ass! I'll hammer him!"

Which ferocious threats only indicated that Jack Blake was getting anxious.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, at last. "Here he is!"

There was a footstep on the shadowed road, and it turned off into the grass by the roadside. The caravanners jumped up to greet Arthur Augustus. But it was not Arthur Augustus.

It was a hony-looking lad who came into the radius of light from the fire, and he touched a ragged cap and blinked at the caravanners.

"Hallo, young shaver!" said Tom.

Blake gave a grunt of deep disappointment.

"Mister Blake 'ere!" asked the newcomer.

"Yes, I'm Blake. What do you want?"

"I've got a letter for you, sir."

"A letter?"

"Yes, if this be the St. Jim's caravan and you be Mister Blake."

"Who the thump can have sent me a letter?" said Blake, in astonishment.

"Hand it over, kid."

The "kid" handed it over.

"No answer, the gentleman said!" he remarked. And he walked back to the road and disappeared in the darkness while Blake was opening the letter.

"Gussy's fist!" ejaculated Blake.

"Gussy's!"

"Yes! Oh, the ass!"

"What the dickens is he writing to you about?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise. "He can't have been dauncy enough to go home."

Blake gave a howl of wrath.

"Read it!"

He tossed the letter to Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell caught it, and the caravanners crowded round to read it in the light of the fire.

It was written in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's elegant calligraphy in pencil, and it ran:

"Dear Blake,—Although it is impossible for me to overlook the disrespect I have received from you and the other fellows, I am sending you a line by a country lad so that you need not feel uneasy on my account. I have accepted St. Leger's hospitality, and shall be staying for a few days at St. Leger Lodge. I shall be obliged if you will send my baggage from the next town you pass.

"Yours sincerely,"

"A. A. D'Arcy."

"P.S.—I trust you will all be in a better frame of mind when we meet next term at St. Jim's."

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at the letter and at one another. The communication quite took their breath away.

"The—the howling ass!" said Tom Merry, at last.

Blake brandished a clenched fist in the air.

"Cutts has got hold of him," he said furiously, "and you can guess what he wants; the cads are after his money! They've inveigled him into St. Leger's place to diddle him into card-playing and gambling—"

"Gussy won't!"

"You know what a cunning brute Cutts is." Blake breathed hard. "Didn't he diddle the fatted calf in the same way only this afternoon? My hat! Next term at St. Jim's—he'll see us

before next term at St. Jim's, the thumping ass! Send on his baggage! I don't think!"

Tom Merry looked at the letter again and shook his head. It was a surprising and unexpected turn of events, and the captain of the Shell did not quite know how to deal with it.

"What the dickens are we going to do?" he asked. "We can't go on and leave Gussy among those gambling blackguards."

Blake gave a snort.

"We're going on, and Gussy's coming with us!" he said.

"But he's at St. Leger Lodge now," said Herries. "Anybody know where that is?"

"Only that it's in this part of the Chilterns," said Tom. "We can find it

easily enough to-morrow, I suppose; but if—"

Blake set his lips.

"And we're going to find it to-morrow," he said. "We're going to start early, and make our first call at St. Leger Lodge. And Gussy's coming away with us, if we have to yank him away by his silly neck!"

"Hear, hear!" said the carnavancers.

That was the programme for the morning. And Tom Merry & Co. turned in, with the intention of turning out at the first gleam of dawn and marching to the rescue of the swell of St. Jim's. And when the early summer sun glimmered on the Chilterns the St. Jim's carnavancers were astir.

THE END.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS.

A Special New Serial by the Editor of the Companion Papers.

CHAPTER 12. Not Promising.

WHEN I returned to the office the parental wrath had died down, though I was advised to work like the editors in the Far West do—with one revolver on their desk and another in their hip-pocket!

I at once advertised for a new office-boy, and, after interviewing several more or less grimy applicants, I decided upon a small, earnest-faced youth, who, before he had been in the office a couple of days, earned the nickname of "Careful Charlie," the keynote of Charlie's existence. He was careful in regard to clothes; he was careful when he set my afternoon tea upon my desk; and—what was more to the point—he was careful in his work.

"Charlie," I said one day, "you are a shining sample of the perfect office-boy!"

"Glad you think so, sir," said Charlie.

"I might mention that perfect office-boys can only work under perfect conditions."

"What do you mean?"

"I want a rise, sir."

"But you have only been here a week!"

Charlie grinned.

"If, sir, as you say, I'm a perfect office-boy, I can command a princely salary anywhere!"

I was forced to agree with him.

"You are certainly a model of carefulness," I remarked.

"In fact, you are worth your weight in paper-indentors! I will see that you get your rise."

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

From that date our Charles drew an additional half-crown per week, and he became more careful than ever.

Nothing ever disturbed the harmony of the office routine. No letters ever came back unstamped or insufficiently addressed.

Charlie saw to that. And he could revise proof-sheets for his chief without making a single blunder or omission.

Within a fortnight Charlie became a most valuable member of the office staff. He tackled work which, strictly speaking, did not come within the sphere of the office-boy.

If one of my sub-officers wished to attend the funeral of a grandmother—in other words, play tennis—he left the office with the comfortable knowledge that Careful Charlie would carry on.

I myself began to feel exceedingly lucked with life. No more sleepless nights; no more fears as to the welfare of the Companion Papers! For had I not secured the services of an office-boy par excellence?

Other editors looked in to have a look at Charlie, as if he were a valuable exhibit in a museum. Certain unscrupulous people tried to bribe Charlie to leave my department, and to take on an underworked and overpaid

job elsewhere. But Charlie remained unwaveringly loyal.

The fame of my office-boy spread far and wide. Celebrated authors took off their hats to him in Fleet Street. Pompos newspaper proprietors tugged to him a cheery "Good-morning!" Famous City magnates asked him to lunch. But, as Gilbert and Sullivan said:

"In spite of all temptations
From other publications
He remained my office-boy!"

But this wonderful state of affairs in the office was altogether too good to last.

CHEER UP!



THE
PENNY
POPULAR
Is Out On FRIDAY!

Within a month of his appointment a startling change came over Charlie.

He arrived at the office one Monday morning a couple of hours late.

"What ails you, Charlie?" I asked, noting his pale, haggard look.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing, I assure you!"

"But you are not the essence of punctuality! And this morning you are two hours late! Are you ill?"

"Nonsense!"

"Did you come by an L.C.C. tram-car, and thus take two hours longer to get here than you would have done by walking?"

He shook his head.

"Then, when in tenderer are you late?" I exclaimed impatiently.

"I—I can't account for it, sir. It—it just happened."

"Very well. Don't let it occur again."

I dismissed the incident of Charlie's lateness from my mind.

It was not until lunch-time that the second blow fell.

The telephone-bell rang violently.

"Hallo! Is that the editor? Foreman printer speaking. Isn't it about time you work up?"

"Er!" I gasped.

"We've not received the corrected proof-sheets of the 'Com,' the 'Magnet,' or the 'Boys' Friend'!"

"Great Scott!"

"I'm surprised at you, slacking in your old age!" said the foreman printer, severely.

"It isn't like you to let us down like this. I don't want to be hasty, but if those proofs aren't here at the printing works by two o'clock there will be the very dickens to pay!"

"Calm yourself, sir!" I said, with such dignity as I could muster. "I will look into the matter at once—"

"Er—"

And the printer rang off.

Striving into the outer office, I discovered "Careful Charlie" writing industriously at his desk. He was so absorbed in his task that he quite failed to notice my approach.

"Charles," I said, severely, "you have let me in the soup! Why haven't the proof pages been corrected?"

The office-boy looked up with a start.

"Pip-pip-proofs!" he stammered.

"Yes! The foreman printer is in the last stages of apoplexy!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Charlie. "I—I'd forgotten all about the blessed proofs, sir."

"You'd forgotten! Why, I thought you were a Peilsman, Charles!"

"That's probably why I forgot, sir," said Charlie.

"Well, if you don't correct those proofs, once, I shall be compelled to see to it."

"What are you writing?"

"A story, sir."

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MADNET. THE BOY FRIENDS. THE GEM. THE VERY POPULAR. OSKELER.
Every Monday. Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

For Next Wednesday:

"LOOKING AFTER GUSBY!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's story will deal with the further adventures of the chums of St. Jim's on their caravan holiday tour, and is a story full of excitement and fun, as the title suggests.

To make certain of your copy, ORDER IN ADVANCE!

RALLY ROUND, EVERYBODY!

It isn't necessary to apologise to readers of the GEM to tell them about Greyfriars. They are, for the most part, as interested in what goes on at Butler's school as they are at St. Jim's.

The News.

It is just that the "Greyfriars Herald" is coming out again. Excuse me writing a second. I want to listen to the cheering. Thank you very much! It was good to hear. For months after month I have had reminders from my friends. They all thought the little weekly should come back. They were right, but you can't get through the war difficulties in a hurry. I did my best.

THE RE-LAUNCHING.

You remember when I lauded the "Greyfriars Herald." It was a smart little craft, well founded, with a good crew, and everything as fresh as paint. "The Adventures of Herlock Sholmes" appeared in it. George Figgins supplied "The Swindled Schoolboys" if Vernon-Smith contributed "Shots at Goal." All the leading lights did their best. Well, the new edition of the ever-popular paper will be even better. I shall have more to say later. Comparatively early in the autumn the "Greyfriars Herald" will appear. I think of getting out a bill, something in this style:

"The 'Greyfriars Herald,'

The Old Favourite,

Will appear in the Autumn.

There will be no War to Cut it Short. It will be Worthy of the Past and of the School."

So that's that! I wanted to oblige my friends. The "G. H." was remembered, and it has not only been kept alive by the Extracts. It made its mark. It will make a bigger mark than ever this time.

ALL GOING WELL!

NICELY, THANKS!

OF COURSE! THE "G. H." IS COMING.

BRAVE ENGLISHWOMEN.

"Stok" tells me that the girls who appear in the GEM are poor weaklings, who shed tears at the slightest provocation, and she thinks this kind of thing makes girls feel very small. As a proof of the courage of women, she instances the Russian Women's Battalion of Death. I shall have to talk seriously to Mr. Martin Clifford about this. Now that we can have a Russian battalion in the GEM, but it would be interesting to know his views on the subject. Some girls are nervy, and easily frightened; but even they would show plenty of pluck—not a doubt of it—if the real need arose. I was glad to read the letter speaking of the matter. Perhaps the modern girl has been misjudged. Perhaps she only wants the chance to parley with an ostentatious bull which is tramping round in the uncomfortable manner common to the species. Perhaps she can vault hedges, but can't free—do any thing brave. But what she is doing shows her to be what we all knew her to be, namely, a brave-hearted, sensible person.

CURRAGH CAMP IS PLEASED.

The "Personal Recollections" have gone down as well in Ireland as elsewhere, and "Husar," who tells me this pleasing news, sends me a copy of the "Military Magazine," with a portrait of the late Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Frederick Shaw on the cover. The paper is first-rate, and well turned out. From its pages I take the following:

"DUBLIN, 1919.

"There's a city, big and pretty,
Where the Wilt! 'tain all day long,
Forming cotons, looking solemn,
Marching to some well-known song."

Sergeant-majors, gay 'old stagers,
Shout and yell with might and main,
Then we hurry, and we scurry,
Up and down the fold again."

Good luck to "F. J. S. (Pte.)" who wrote the lines! Dublin is all he thinks it, and with it also rhymes with "the Liberty City" and might come in. You can't beat Dublin!

A FEW REQUESTS.

One is for a box from Euby at St. Jim's or Greyfriars. Another is for a story about the pits. Other correspondents want more about the various famous personalities. A girl reader asks about the American fighting men, Jack Dempsey and Jess Willard. She is intensely interested in the Noble Art. Then comes the following: "Liverpool. Dear Editor,—Try as much as I can I cannot keep my clothes very tidy. I brush them about ten times a day, and yet little bits of cotton wool, and dust keep appearing on my garments. I fold them carefully every night, and yet I cannot keep them exactly neat. I would be very thankful indeed if you could suggest a way out of my difficulty.—Very Loyal Reader." It seems to me with all the trouble he is taking, my correspondent must look quite as smart as there is any need for a book to look. It never seems worth while to worry overmuch about these things. Just to keep neat and tidy, and the end is gained. If clothes get out of shape they should be pressed now and again. If this is done they look almost as good as new. Occasional brushing ought to keep anybody's clothes in proper order. Ten times a day strikes me as overdoing things—just slightly!

MORE SUGGESTIONS.

Stories about the seniors at St. Jim's! A Rhyl chum asks for these. Well, I am giving my best, and, maybe, when the GEM is enlarged something may be done in this direction. If I took all the notions my enthusiastic friends sent in I should be giving supplements to the GEM stories about the interesting home life of Master Bagley Trimble, and the fat warty look for tea, ditto supper, and at other times. The menus of all his six meals per diem—I am sure he has as many as half a dozen—would make interesting reading.

AND WHAT ABOUT D'ARCY?

Well, one could not leave him out. Not even, as Julius Caesar used to say to the pons-hunters. There would be his adventures in the City and when he was travelling with Lord Eastwood. Most likely Gussy goes to the Opera when in town, and to all the fashionable affairs. So like him, you know! But there are limits to what I can crowd into the GEM—more of the pity!

YOUR EDITOR,

NOTICES.

BOOK NUMBERS.

Harry Dickman, 11, McKenna Street, Cape Town, S. Africa—215 "Gem" and "Solon Leo" Library.

F. C. Clark, 542, Fishponds Road, Fishponds, Bristol—"Gem" early numbers. Write first.

I gave a gasp. Writing stories was a new departure for Charlie.

"What sort of a story?" I exclaimed.

Charlie blushed.

"The—the story of my heart, sir!"

"What on earth do you mean?"

"It's a love-letter, sir."

"A love-letter! Great jumping crackers! How dare you waste your time writing such stuff! Put it out of sight at once!"

Charlie discreetly hid his effusion under the blotting-book.

Shortly before 10 o'clock he brought the proof-sheets into my sanctum.

As a rule it was not necessary to supervise Charlie's work, which had always been flawless.

On this occasion he had made a proper hash of things. He had made corrections where no corrections were necessary; and he had omitted to rectify the most glaring blunders in the type-setting.

"Look here! I don't seriously, 'you'll have to huck up! Hitherto you have enjoyed a reputation which few office-boys can boast. But I can't overlook this carelessness!"

My little sermon had no effect whatever.

"Careful Charlie" absolutely belied his nickname that afternoon.

The tea which he brought me at four o'clock was so weak that it could scarcely stand up in the pot.

Charlie dumped the tray recklessly on to my desk, with the result that a cascade of hot water from the jug shot over a pile of manuscript.

Martin Clifford was in my room at the time.

"That's a queer sort of office-boy you've got," he remarked, when Charlie withdrew, after tripping over the wastepaper-basket.

I sighed.

"Up till to-day he was a paragon of all the virtues," I said, "but weaker-headed than anyone else on the staff, he made tea fit for a duke; in fact, he was a masterpiece. We called him 'Careful Charlie.' I think we shall have to amend it to 'Clumsy Charlie.'"

Martin Clifford laughed.

"No tea for me, thank!" he said hastily, as he turned to pour out the colorless liquid.

The remainder of that afternoon was a nightmare.

Charlie blundered about like Coker on the war-path, or like a bull in a china-shop.

He failed to pour out the coffee, and confusion behind him. The office was in a state of upheaval.

"I'll give him a day to recover himself," I thought.

When I arrived at my sanctum, after a sleepless night, one of my sub-editors dashed into the room. He was almost apoplectic with fury.

"That—that precious young ass——" he began.

"Hallo! What's 'Careful Charlie' been up to now?" I asked.

"He—he—the sub-editor looked as if he were going into a fit—he's had the morning post to light the fire with!"

"What!"

"It's a fact. All the readers' letters have been consigned to the flames!"

"Ye gods!"

"The fellow's a moonstruck, silly idiot!" continued the sub-editor savagely. "Dozens of letters have mysteriously disappeared, and I put a paragraph of apology in your Chat page."

I nodded.

"Send Charlie in to me!" I commanded. A moment later the office boy blundered into my room in a dazed manner.

"Pull yourself together, man!" I rapped out. "What is the meaning of this new out-rage?"

"I——"

"Do you consider my readers' letters sufficiently unimportant to warrant wholesale destruction?" I shouted.

"Oh dear! Oh crumbles! I——"

"Has there come over you this last day or two?"

"Careful Charlie" coloured to the roots of his hair.

"The—the fact is, sir——" he began.

"What've fallen in love?"

When removed by this frank confession.

And case, you'd better fall out again before you wish to retain your job!

And you!

Scott, sir?"

And you're comparatively fresh in your cradle, and yet you've fallen in love with a girl who's been in the GEM since the Brown, of Streatham, sir."

(Continued on page 14.)

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

(Continued from page 15).

"My compliments to Miss Brown, and tell her that she's seriously interfering with your future prospects! You're not sickening for the sack, are you?"

"Runo, sir!"

"Well, luck up, and give Miss Brown the go-by for ten years or so! I warn you that if you transgress again you'll be sacked—fired out—finished! You understand?"

"Yesir!" said Charlie, beginning to snivel.

I related a little.

"You are a promising youngster, Charlie, and I don't want to see you go to the dogs. You must not allow your career to be wrecked by a boy-and-girl flirtation. I am trying to be lenient with you, but we cannot have the office routine disorganised."

I hoped that "Careful Charlie" would benefit by this advice.

But my hopes were ill-founded.

Charlie's love affairs and his office duties became so hopelessly intermingled that he fairly put his foot in it—both feet, as a matter of fact.

And this was the manner of his undoing. He had a letter to despatch to Frank Richards. He had also a letter to despatch to Miss Beattie Brown, of Streatham. And he got them mixed!

Imagine my surprise when, a couple of mornings later, I received the following note from Frank Richards:

"Dear Ed.—The enclosed letter, which contains terms of emendation quite new to me, reached me this morning."

As I arrived in a Fleetway House envelope, I am wondering if you can throw any light on the matter.

"Who 'dear Beattie' may be I have not the foggiest notion—unless it refers to Beattie Hunter!"

"Yours ever,

"FRANK RICHARDS."

This was the enclosed letter:

"Dear Beattie.—You are simply great! Your style of beauty is first-rate! Those deep-blue eyes, they haunt me still. Fair goddess, thro'out on Streatham Hill! How fondly, dearest, I recall

That evening in the picture hall.

When those blue orbits gazed in mine.

And you said, 'Charlie, I'll be thine!'

Those thrilling words will ever rank Supreme within my memory-tank!

How can I concentrate on toil,

Or bays the merry midnight oil,

When thought of you possess my mind—

The sweetest, fairest of your kind?

When dotting on your wondrous beauties I must neglect my office duties.

The 'Gem,' the 'Magnet,' and the 'Pop.'

What if their circulations drop?

The beatty Editor may go,

For all I care, to Jericho!

My work is in a frightful mess

Through dreaming of your charms, fair Beattie!

Will come with me to-morrow night

To watch, with unexcused delight,

The fair performers on the scene—

Though none so fair as you, my queen?

But here! I'll make no further parley.

I am,—Your own devoted CHARLIE."

I gasped when I read that extraordinary

coherence. And I expect Frank Richards

gaped, too!

"Careful Charlie" fairly merited the death-sentence this time, and there would be no recommendation to mercy.

As for Miss Beattie Brown, of Streatham, she must have received the following letter:

"Dear Mr. Richards,—For goodness' sake get a move on with the next 'Magnet' story! The artist is straining like a greyhound on the leash to get to work on the illustrations."

"Shake a leg, man!"

"Yours ever,

"THE EDITOR."

"Careful Charlie" wasn't given another chance. He was sacked on the spot. And I'm afraid I had no sympathy for him. A fellow who falls in love at the age of fifteen deserves all he gets!

That was the end of Careful Charlie; but it wasn't the end of my list of office-boys. Oh dear no!

Charlie's successor was a youth who had been reading in the newspaper of a proposed four-hour day for railway workers. He seemed to imagine that this concession should also be granted to office-boys.

Anyway, he turned up at eleven and departed at three. And one day he didn't turn up at all—for the simple reason he had been sacked overnight!

After that I was without an office-boy for quite a long time.

At that period there was a great scarcity of sugar, butter, and office-boys.

The latter were becoming a very independent tribe.

One boy, in answer to my advertisement, said he would be pleased to act as office-boy on the staff of the Companion Papers on the following conditions:

1. That a motor-car conveyed him to and from the Fleetway House.

2. That every day in the week should be a half-holiday, with the exception of Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays and Sundays, which should be whole ones.

3. That the salary given should not be less than £1,000 a year.

4. That meals should be provided on the premises free of charge.

5. That a three months' vacation should be granted in the summer, together with a month's holiday at Christmas.

It is superfluous to add that this presumptuous youth did not get the job!

After a long interval I at last succeeded in getting hold of another office-boy.

He looked a very smart youngster, and he was, on his own showing, a perfect glutton for work.

At the end of a week's strenuous toil he complained that he hadn't enough work to do.

I at once added to his labours, but even then he wasn't satisfied, for one day, finding the time hang heavily on his hands, he amused himself by taking all the office typewriters to pieces!

There were no mechanics in those days—at least, mechanics were as difficult to get as butter, sugar, and office-boys—so I had to reconstruct all the machines myself.

The task occupied me all day, and I went home fuming. So did the hard-working office-boy. But in his case he had instructions never to show up at the office again.

After this we had a boy who was deaf, and misunderstood everything that was said

to him, like Tom Dutton of Greyfriars. He was perpetually fighting with the office-boys engaged on other papers; and one day, when he came into my sanctum with his hair dishevelled, his clothes torn, and his nose swollen double, I told him—with the aid of a megaphone—that I had no further use for his services.

Since that time office-boys have come and gone in a never-ending procession.

Some have stayed longer than others, but the majority have not lasted longer than six weeks.

At the time of writing I am extremely fortunate. I have an office-boy. And, strange to say, the Companion Papers are weathering the storm successfully without one.

I don't think I shall advertise for another office-boy just yet, and when I do I shall be most exacting in my demands.

The advertisement will run something like this:

OFFICE-BOY wanted for a number of boys' publications. Must be clean, sober, intelligent, and fond of work. Must have exhaustive knowledge of English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Russian, and must be able to speak broad Scotch fluently. Must also be an expert at shorthand, typewriting, orthography, trigonometry, Pelmanism, and every sort of 'lam' under the sun. Salary, five shillings per week, with an additional sixpence to cover the high cost of living—Apply, by post, to the Editor of the Companion Papers."

In this way I shall hope to secure the services of a really first-class office-boy.

Don't all speak at once!

Going to Press.

WHAT are you going to be when you grow up?"

This familiar question was put to a class of L.C.E. boys a short time ago by an examining officer.

"If you please, sir," said a boy in the front row, "an editor."

"And why, Johnny?"

"Cos an editor never does no work, sir."

This opinion seems to have become pretty general.

Only the other day a visitor to my sanctum remarked:

"By Jove, I wish I were you, sir!"

I asked him why.

"Because, like the lilies of the field, you neither toil nor spin!"

"Are you suggesting that I am one of the idle rich?" I demanded, rather heatedly.

"Well, I won't vouch for your wealth, but you're certainly idle!"

"And how do you arrive at that conclusion?"

"Because most of the work in connection with the Companion Papers is done by Martin Clifford, Frank Richards, Owen Conquest, and the artists. They write and illustrate the stories, and there you are!"

"My dear fellow," I said, as patiently as I could, "you're making a very big mistake! I admit that a lot of my time is wasted in interviewing people like yourself, but the rest of my time is fully occupied, I can assure you!"

"My visitor chuckled.

"What do you have to do?" he inquired.

(To be continued in next Wednesday's issue of the Gem Library. Order your copy to-day.)

Buy the

I RAIKIE
LIBRARY.

Every Thursday.

"The
Marked Nugget"
A Rattling "BUFFALO BILL" Yarn

Owing to the enormous demand for the "PRAIRIE LIBRARY," with its grand long complete tales of Wild West adventures, introducing BUFFALO BILL the King of Scouts, this splendid series will be issued every week from to-morrow onwards. "The Marked Nugget" is the title of the first weekly number, and a finer yarn was never written. Don't miss it.



Buffalo Bill